

Planning Update

San Joaquin National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update #4

Spring has arrived at the refuge. Lesser and greater sandhill cranes are still roosting on the west side of the San Joaquin River and the neotropical migrants, such as Bullock's orioles and Wilson's warblers, are starting to migrate through the refuge. Most of the geese have started their northward migration, but you can still hear cackling and Aleutian Canada geese and white-fronted geese on the refuge. One of the refuge's biologists has gone to up to Del Norte County to follow and observe the geese. The refuge continues to be used by mixed flocks of pintail, mallard, widgeon, and teal. The roost ponds will begin to be drawn down in the next month or so for migrating shorebirds.

Public Open House

We would like to meet with you and share the alternative management ideas that the planning staff has been working on. To do that, we have scheduled an open house for Tuesday, April 18, 2000.

Where: The Stanislaus County Agricultural Center at
3800 Cornucopia
Way in Modesto.
Harvest Hall.

When: 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM.
Date: 18 April 2000

From 6:45 to 7:45, we will present the refuge planning process and the ideas we have generated for the refuge to date, including possible refuge expansion. After the presentation we will be available to talk to you, hear your suggestions and concerns about the refuge and the preliminary alternatives, and what additional issues you think need to be considered during the planning process. We



realize that any changes made in the management of the refuge could affect you or your interests.

Please join us, have some refreshments and share your thoughts about the refuge. We welcome your suggestions, questions and comments.

Directions:

From Highway 99, take the Crow's Landing Road exit and drive about 2 ½ miles south on Crow's Landing Road past Hackett Road. The Stanislaus County Agricultural Center is on the left side of Crow's Landing Road, just before Service Road. The facility is wheelchair accessible. The phone number for the Agricultural Center is (209) 525-6800.

Where We Started

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. The Act presented the mission for the Refuge System, and states that all wildlife refuges must have a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) in place by the year 2013. These plans will provide a 15-year guide, using the best available scientific knowledge, to help managers achieve the purposes for which each refuge was established, and to work toward the mission of the Refuge System. The Act provides the Service with guidance for managing refuges in a way that ensures the long-term conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. Maintenance of biological integrity and diversity along with facilitating compatible wildlife-dependent recreation in the refuge system are two of the important principles laid out in the Act.

What We've Been Doing

Since the last planning update, sent out in January 2000, the planning team has continued work on the CCP for the San Joaquin River Refuge. The

Greetings!

This is the fourth in a series of updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to keep you informed about planning efforts for the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). We will be sending these planning updates regularly to landowners near the study area, government agencies, private organizations, and others who express interest.

This update presents a description of the work we've been doing on the plan and the planning process we are undertaking.



Planning Process

- : Identify public and agency issues and concerns
- : Gather data
- : Develop goals and objectives
- : Develop strategies
- 9 Evaluate impacts
- 9 Write draft
- 9 Public Review of draft
- 9 Public notice of decision



Stanislas River

planning team has been meeting semimonthly to discuss various issues addressed in the plan. The team has been developing goals and management alternatives for the refuge, which include objectives and strategies for the refuge.

The planning team is also following up on requests received at the last public open house to expand the refuge boundary. Refuge staff have put together a request to study refuge expansion and is submitting it to the Service's Washington DC headquarters.

What's Been Happening on the Refuge

- C The refuge has established a nursery and has used it to cultivate about 500 riparian plant cuttings. These cuttings have been planted on the west side of the San Joaquin River.
- C The refuge has led field trips for the Yokut Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society.
- C Refuge staff will draw down the waterfowl roost ponds in early April. Goose, Page, and Nelson Lakes will be drawn down or allowed to drain for migrating shorebirds.
- C The San Joaquin River has been up to a level near the top of the bank for 3 - 5 weeks and has spread over some of the new lands west of the river. The refuge has closed the pipe gate on the Hageman property to prevent water from backing up into White Lake.
- C Refuge staff have seen signs of vandalism and trespassing on the river bottom corridor.
- C Restoration work will begin on Ring Neck Pond in the Buffington Field and Riley Slough.
- C Refuge staff are continuing to work on the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Service and the Tulare Mosquito Abatement District. All parties have reviewed the document and progress is being made towards finalizing the MOU. Pesticide use proposals are currently being written for this coming spring and summer.

- C Refuge staff have been working on farming plans to manage waterfowl feed production and grazing for the refuge.

Community Forum

The Refuge has been hosting a Community Forum quarterly at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center in Modesto. In lieu of the April community forum, the planning team and refuge staff will hold a public open house. The open house is described above.

For More Information

We are available to provide any information that you may need regarding the Refuge and this planning process. Also, Service staff can attend a meeting of your organization to discuss the development of the San Joaquin River Refuge CCP. Please notify us at least three weeks in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts.

If you have questions, comments, concerns, or would like information about the Refuge, please feel free to call, e-mail, or write us:

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Please pass this planning update along to anyone you think might be interested in the planning process.

Please call or write to us to be placed on our mailing list or to report a change in your mailing address.

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Attention: Leslie Lew*